

POLICY NUMBER: S-005

Title: Visitors in Research Laboratories with Controlled Access

1.0 Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to define a policy for visitors that enter VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System (VAPHS) research laboratory settings or research support areas. The term "research laboratory" in this policy only includes the wet laboratories that require employees/staff to use an ID-card or keys to gain access. The term "research support area" in this policy indicates common use areas such as the room that contains the ice machine and the sterilizer or the room that contains the water filtration system.

2.0 Revision History

| R&D Committee Approval Date | Revision # | Change | Reference Section(s) | Effective Date |
|-----------------------------------|---------------|------------|-------------------------|----------------|
| 03/26/2013 | N/A | New Policy | | 03/27/2013 |

3.0 Definitions

Visitor – A visitor is considered to be any person who enters a research laboratory, research support facility, or other potentially hazardous area upon the express or implied invitation of the laboratory's principal investigator/lab director or his/her staff. The VAPHS has an obligation to ensure all visitors are escorted throughout the VAPHS Medical Center.

Visitors do NOT include:

1. Employees, fellows and students of the VAPHS authorized to participate in one or more approved Institutional Biosafety Committee (IBC) and Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) protocols.
2. A consultant or other non-VAPHS faculty, staff or student registered as an authorized agent or guest and approved for work on a specific IACUC or IBC approved protocol.
3. An outside vendor or a VAPHS employee not otherwise approved on a specific IBC or IACUC-approved protocol but authorized by the facility for the purpose of facility maintenance, certification, or inspection.

Authorized guide/escort – The person that invites the visitor. This person makes arrangements for visitors to enter into research laboratories or research support facilities. The authorized guide/escort must be a VA Research employee who is authorized to access that laboratory space.

4.0 Introduction

Laboratory research often involves potentially hazardous and regulated materials, such as biological and chemical agents, toxins, and radioisotopes, as well as potentially hazardous equipment. For this reason, regular access to VAPHS research laboratories and research support facilities is restricted to authorized laboratory personnel whose presence is part of their normal work, supervised research or coursework, or is a consequence of normal interaction and collaboration.

Employees, students, and individuals from other academic or research institutions, business organizations, other governmental agencies, and vendors may visit VAPHS research laboratories and research support facilities on a short term, infrequent basis provided that there is a business or educational purpose for the visit. Principal investigators and laboratory directors are responsible for making appropriate arrangements for such visits based on considerations of safety and non-disruption of research activities; these individuals may deny access to non-authorized personnel.

5.0 Policy

5.1 An authorized guide/escort must notify the Research and Development (R&D) Office and VAPHS Police Services that they will be bringing a visitor into research laboratory space. The guide/escort must provide the R&D Office and VAPHS Police Services with the visitor's name, the reason for the visit, anticipated duration of the visit, facility location, and any other required information by email or in writing **at least one (1) business day** in advance of the visit.

5.2 Visitors entering VAPHS research laboratories or research support facilities must be escorted by the authorized guide/escort at all times. The visitor must be informed of the potential hazards to which they may be exposed while in the laboratory, as well as any appropriate precautions to protect themselves. As relevant, a briefing should be provided regarding activities that are currently underway in the laboratory, what to do in case of an emergency, and exit routes. Under some circumstances, visitors may be asked to wear personal protective equipment appropriate for the hazards present in the laboratory or research facility. Additional access restrictions may apply to some laboratories that contain the following: animals, biohazardous agents, laser equipment or non-ionizing radiation sources, radioactive materials or radiation-producing machines, human subject research, and exempt quantities of Select Agents or Toxins.

5.3 Principal Investigators and laboratory managers/supervisors are responsible for implementing and enforcing this policy.

5.4 Visitors not in compliance with the requirements outlined above will be prohibited from entering VAPHS research laboratories or research support facilities. If a visitor fails to adhere to the above requirements once inside VAPHS research laboratories or research support facilities, they will be removed from the area immediately.

5.5 Minors are NOT permitted in VAPHS research laboratories or research support facilities.

5.6 Pets are NOT permitted in VAPHS research laboratories or research support facilities.

//Electronically signed//

Gretchen L. Haas, PhD
Research and Development Committee Chair

//Electronically signed//

Steven H. Graham, MD, PhD
Associate Chief of Staff for Research and Development